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ABSTRACT

Vocational and technical educators must develop strategies for implementing and evaluating educational change in response to the changing needs of society and industry. Federal legislation reflects the shift in emphasis from training people to fit the job to meeting the needs and interests of the individual. Unfortunately, inadequate data on educational outcomes, lack of rewards, fear of the consequences, and individual resistance slow the change process. Change agents with the authority to take responsibility and to provide adequate support help can effectively bring about change. They should thoroughly analyze prevailing teacher perceptions of the existing instructional situation, desirable changes, and the feelings of all staff toward proposed changes; encourage supportive relationships; invite staff to participate in shared decision making and to take responsibility for supervision; and guide staff development. Attitudes must often be changed to deal with educational change. Reality testing, an interaction analysis technique, is recommended as a method of creating dissatisfaction to make teachers receptive to change. Successful change can best occur in a change-oriented situation where everyone involved is aware of the purpose of the change, the proposed time frame, the anticipated results, and the rewards for changing or the penalties for not changing. (YLB)

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THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE AND VOCATIONAL-
TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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If you feel that educational change in your school comes as a very slow and painful process, you are probably right. The fact is educational change (with the exception of agriculture) usually lags ten to twenty-five years behind changes in business, labor, agriculture, and industry (Mort, 1957, p. 181). Several explanations are appropriate which help to illustrate the processes of change, particularly as change is related to vocational and technical education.

We usually think of change as a result of decisions that are based on underlying assumptions and values which prompted the decisions. Change involves alternations and is relative to some existing conditions. For instance, in education, these conditions are related to policies, practices, goals and objectives, or behavior. Change can happen; but planned change is best. In fact, the focus of educational change should be on attitudes,

beliefs, habits, and instructional practices.

This afternoon I would like to share with you the results of my research and my ideas about educational change.

1. How is society changing and why are these changes important to vocational and technical educators?
2. How is vocational and technical education changing?
3. Why does education change so slowly?
4. Why do people usually resist change?
5. How can we help to bring about successful vocational and technical education changes?

As early as the Industrial Revolution (1769) and continuing into the future, technological and knowledge overflows have influenced and necessitated the need for educational change. As technological advances continue to flourish, they affect every organization. American industry is undergoing rapid changes and consequently changing its manpower needs. Yet, industry is supplied for the most part by institutions usually blind to the need for change.

Consistently, labor market trends and projections indicate that future years offer little opportunity for unskilled labor. As the average level of education rises, so does the average level of job qualifications. For instance, some employers prefer employees who have a college degree even though the job tasks do not require a college degree. Another example, closely related to vocational education, is that of requiring clerical employees to have shorthand skills, even though the employee may never use these skills.

We can also see the changing emphasis and redirection of vocational education being constantly reflected in the National legislation. The Morrill Act (1862) promoted the preparation of people for jobs in agricultural and mechanical arts through land grant colleges. The Smith-Hughes

Act (1917) emphasized the economic function of vocational education by training individuals for the occupations needed by society. Essentially, vocational education was created to serve the economic system by the law of supply and demand. This practice prevailed until the early 1960s.

During the early 1960s, unemployment was high; furthermore, many individuals who were employed were poorly-matched with jobs in terms of their needs, interests, and abilities. At the same time, there was growing concern for special needs individuals.

By 1963, the emphasis for vocational education had shifted from training individuals for limited occupational categories to meeting and serving the needs of people. The emphasis on people instead of occupations is continued under the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments.

Public Law 94-482 will have an even greater influence on the future direction of vocational-technical education. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 specifically address the needs of people in five critical areas dealing with: (1) bilingual education, (2) racial minorities, (3) women, and the (4) disadvantaged, and (5) handicapped. The Amendments call for strict planning and accountability procedures at the state and local levels. At the present, and continuing into the future, questions of institutional scope and mission, government-sponsored programs, declining high school enrollments, mid-career changes, technological demand for retraining and the decline in the number of veterans will all serve as stimuli for change; and compel educational institutions to justify their existence and compete for students, as well as for training resources. Essentially, one incentive for educational change may be institutional survival. Therefore, it behooves vocational and technical educators to recognize that change is inevitable and to develop strategies for implementing and evaluating instructional change.

Several barriers to educational change are obvious. One of the greatest is an inadequate data base from which to make educational decisions and predictions which affect long-range planning. Unlike agriculture, business, labor, and industry, the results of education come slowly (Owens, 1970, p. 145), sometimes taking as long as ten to fifteen years before any measurable differences can be realized; if indeed they ever can. For example, a farmer can quantify the effectiveness of new technology by production. Likewise, a business can measure the effectiveness of new procedures through a cost-effectiveness analysis. Educational outcomes, on the other hand, are based on data primarily from the social and behavioral sciences where exact controls or measures are difficult or impossible to maintain. Consequently, educational outcomes have not necessarily motivated change.

The gradual rates at which educational innovations are adopted are often encouraged by the lack of rewards for educational change. Monetary gains for educational innovations are almost nonexistent. Pay scale or step raises are usually consistent for all individuals who have remained at the same institution a specified amount of time regardless of their performance; or who have completed a certain amount of college course work. Job survival has not necessarily depended upon an individual's ability or willingness to keep up with the times. As a rule, education has done almost nothing to grant rewards beyond the standard salary increases for the creative and innovative individual. Moreover, rewards other than economic such as teacher aid assistance, teacher preparation time, and relief from an abundance of extra-curricular duties are often overlooked. Thus, the reward factor for educational change is weak or nonexistent.

Not only are monetary rewards or their equivalent rare when it comes to remuneration for educational innovations, school systems may be

handicapped if they are not staffed with key individuals to serve as change agents. This is not usually true of business, labor, and industry. The county agent of agriculture extension services for instance, serves as liaison between farmer and researcher. This type of activity stimulates an atmosphere of change when new procedures and technology are introduced. The farmer is receptive to new techniques, machinery, and products because he knows that it can enhance his total production. On the other hand, school administrators who are in a position to bring about change are usually primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo (Owens, 1970, p. 127). This is illustrated by the fact that most educational changes are prompted by external forces which are unplanned by administrators. However, whether changes are suggested from within or outside the institution, they imply that on the basis of the existing procedures, methods, or outcomes, the present state of affairs is not satisfactory.

Fear of the consequences of change and individual resistance to change is as old as mankind. As one might expect, hesitancy toward change is natural since change usually deals with the unknown and can have many affects on individuals. It can affect their: (1) income, (2) physical environment, (3) self-esteem, (4) job status, (5) group relationships, (6) power relationships, (7) opportunity for self development, and (8) freedom of action, to name a few.

Most of us are probably familiar with the concept of predisposition. People hear and see what is congenial to their predispositions. That is, they engage in selected exposure. Facts usually do not affect an individual's predisposition. When the individual's mind is made up, the less facts are effective. Individuals tend to protect themselves against unwanted facts; and, they will change or resist communication about change in accordance with their predisposition. In such instances, information acceptance and retention is more effective when active participation is encouraged.

Individuals accept change in accordance with the firmness with which prior attitudes were held and with their involvement and interest in the proposed change. Change is more likely to occur when there is minor difference between the anticipated outcomes of the proposed change and the individual's prejudices. Individuals who have mixed or neutral feelings (conflicting predispositions) are usually more responsive toward change than those whose minds are already made up.

A certain amount of job insecurity is present from time to time and the suggestion of change could be an agitation to existing insecurities. For instance, teaching faculty may fear that they will perform inadequately with a new method of instruction (such as computer-assisted instruction) or that the change is a move toward their unemployment.

Evaluative measures utilized to document the need for change are often threatening. Sometimes people associate any kind of work assessment with their personal work performance. They may feel that their performance has been rated as being poor by their superiors, or that their performance has been inadequately or inaccurately evaluated.

Another reason that administrative and instructional staff resist change is their fear that the change will create more work. Initially, this is true. Actually, educators are not unlike any other group of workers. They are likely to create a wall of resistance if they see that the proposed change will complicate their daily routine by requiring them to learn a new skill or wade through additional paperwork. On the other hand, some people resist change if they feel that it will create a monotonous or stifling work environment which inhibits creativity.

Change may be opposed on the basis of facts indicating counter outcomes to those proposed. If this is the case, a closer look and a reevaluation of the situation is necessary. Then again, some individuals resist change because it is change. Perhaps they are apathetic to progress or just simply

do not want to be bothered.

Various studies have been conducted in industrial settings in an effort to determine effective ways to bring about change. In the 1930s a large manufacturing company (Harwood Manufacturing Company) studied a change in their production process under three different experimental conditions. Under one set of conditions, changes were dictated to employees. Production fell below the usual rates and never recovered. This change strategy was based on a one-way, from the top down, communication system. Value judgements, good, bad, or indifferent, are irrelevant at this point. The point is how the change was introduced and the response to it. If one applies this same principle to educational change, he might expect similar results--a permanent lag in performance.

Another industrial plant sought to increase production and introduced an assembly line work situation without properly preparing workers. Production increased; so did employee absenteeism and turnover. The solution to one problem--low production rates presented another problem--worker alienation.

The second condition under which change was implemented permitted limited participation of employees. Under these circumstances, employees selected a representative to discuss the proposed changes with management. Production immediately dropped and then gradually improved until performance returned to its original rate and level.

The third set of conditions under which change was introduced, encouraged total participation of all employees affected by the change. Initially, performance fell below the usual level, but finally rose above its original level. The greatest amount of change occurred when participants took an active role in planning and implementing the change.

Teacher participation is invaluable when encouraging instructional

change. Participation reduces ego-defensive behavior and provides group support and identity. Therefore, central attention should be given to the planning and implementation activities. Actually implementing the change will draw out and reflect the behavior of those affected by the change. Compatibility between structural change (that which is to be changed) and behavioral change (indicated by the acceptance level of the proposed change) is the key link between developing new instructional materials, for example, and instructor utilization of such materials.

Educators charged with the responsibility of bringing about instructional changes may wish to relate their change efforts to those of industry by relating people change to that which is to be changed. For example, data could be collected from instructional staff which indicate their perceptions of the operating characteristics of the school.

Information reflecting the system's leadership, communication, interaction, decision-making and goal-setting processes, control measures and performance levels could be analyzed to assess the present state of the system and also to identify areas which need further analysis.

Methods of data collecting range from soliciting personal opinions and feelings of individuals to administering standardized instruments to a variety of check lists. Informal conversations between the coordinator of the change and those affected by the change can serve to assess existing attitudes and to address and respond to projected fears. The key to selecting a method and instruments for collecting the data is whether or not the responses will be useful as a basis from which to make future decisions.

Comparative data representative of several programs in a school may need to be studied before identifying programs which are most in need of improvement and setting priorities for change. Exploring instructional materials and processes are two evaluative measures which can indicate program strengths and weaknesses. Other measures such as advisory committee evaluations, student evaluations, employer evaluations, information

collected from appropriate accrediting and licensing agencies, self evaluations, and outside evaluators are valuable data sources. Information regarding facilities, equipment, faculty, administrative and support personnel, and public relations services is also needed.

The objective is to encourage supportive relationships and to invite all instructional staff to participate in shared decision-making and to take responsibility for supervision. This type of management originated in industry; but it is an ideal for which all organizations can strive. Unfortunately, it seldom exists in real-life situations.

Assessing prevailing teacher perceptions of the existing instructional situation as well as their feelings toward proposed changes should be a primary consideration. Important details to remember are: Effective educational changes must have top administrative support and flow from the top down. By the same token, significant change can occur only to the extent that it is accepted at lower levels of the institution (Sergiovanni, 1971, p. 163). In other words, the success of instructional change is in direct proportion to its acceptance by the teachers.

There are no easy solutions to bringing about educational changes because institutional characteristics vary with each situation. Therefore, appropriate changes should be suggested after a thorough analysis to determine what changes are desirable and to what extent. The manner in which the analysis is conducted is often as important as the actual findings. The following suggestions are offered as a frame of reference to serve as a starting point for individuals involved in the change process.

Effective decision-making for change necessitates identifying a change agent, assigning that person or group authority commensurate with responsibility and providing adequate support help. Educational change agents may be internal or external. External factors prompt many educational

changes unplanned by school administrators. For instance, legislation, business, agriculture, industry, labor, and civic groups all produce social, political, psychological and economic effects which influence future trends of education.

Internal change agents should be capable of conducting continuous studies of training needs to develop programs which are related to the realities of the world of work. The change agent serves as a pacesetter. He is an innovator and consequently, receptive to new ideas. He reads a lot, discusses issues with others, and continues to develop professionally. He makes decisions and issues directives. He also serves as liaison between and among various educational groups such as administrators, advisory committees, faculty and staff, and the local Board of Education.

It is suggested that educational supervisors are in a position to assume a change posture (Sergiovanni, 1971, p. 160). Supervisors, however, should be particularly sensitive to stimulating, promoting, and maintaining group interest and morale. They should accept and operate within the framework of democratic change ethics (MacDonald, 1966, p. 3).

Democratic ethics include such principles as:

- 1) engineering change to encourage a collaborative effort
- 2) designing changes which are educational for participants
- 3) considering change on an experimental basis
- 4) designing changes which are task-oriented; that is, designing changes which are directed by the requirements of the problem confronted and possible solutions rather than oriented to the maintenance or extension of the prestige or power of those who originated the ideas (Benne, 1949, p. 204-206).

Internal change agents can guide the professional development of staff in general as well as in technical areas. Staff development is an excellent way to revise and update instructional materials and processes.

Finally, the burden of proof for change lies with the individual or group advocating the change. Therefore, individuals initiating change should collect the facts and establish evidence of the value of the change. Change which emanates from a secure data base usually garners respect and support.

A significant factor associated with change seems to be the inability of existing attitudes to deal with change. The development of attitudes evolves from many facets of one's life. Vocational and technical educators need to be concerned with attitudes to the extent that they influence an individual's predisposition to act.

A basic theme inherent in conditions facilitating attitude change is: Promote a situation where the individual is dissatisfied with his present state of affairs. Help the individual to see that the current situation no longer satisfies his needs or self image or that the individual's level of aspiration has changed. A significant point is: It is not the change, but how it is interpreted. Experts suggest that to bring about the greatest amount of change, it must be on an equal status basis. For example, the change could be introduced as part of the total goal achievement of the organization.

Change related research indicated that if you assign a person a role he accepts, his attitude becomes consistent with the role. The role must be accepted by the individual and be relatively permanent. It should require full time activity and it should require giving up the old role. If the role is not permanent, it may not be accepted. If it is not full-time, it may not require giving up the old role.

Past attempts to create teacher dissatisfaction have been characterized by supervisor observations of classroom activities followed by supervisor/teacher conferences. These conferences usually end up as sessions during

which the supervisor evaluates the teacher and suggests classroom practices which need improvement. The teacher may have little or no say about curriculum changes and revisions. An interaction analysis technique known as reality testing provides feedback to teachers while holding evaluative measures at a minimum (Amidon & Flanders, 1963, p. 4). As the name suggests, teacher-student interaction in the classroom is recorded by an observer. Classroom interaction is analyzed in terms of the percentage of time spent in teacher talk and the percentage of time spent in student talk. This system provides objective feedback that could serve as a basis of information for change. Here again, participation is a key to implementing change because it aids in information retention and makes persuasion more effective.

Successful change is dependent upon the context in which specific situational variables exist and operate simultaneously. Because change is situationally unique, it would be inappropriate to provide hard and fast rules for implementing change.

A search and review of the literature suggested that the following guidelines are common to most change-oriented situations.

- 1) Establish a theoretical or empirical data base indicating the need for the change
- 2) Identify goals and objectives in terms of measurable outcomes
- 3) Help individuals to set their own goals
- 4) Secure a strong level of commitment and support for the change from the top of the administrative structure, down.
- 5) Identify policies and guidelines for the change
- 6) Establish an evaluation procedure and a method of feedback
- 7) Provide a means for accomplishing goals (materials, people, resources, facilities, equipment, system of communication, and procedures for dealing with unanticipated problems)
- 8) Identify a time frame to direct specific activities
- 9) Implement change from the top down

- 10) If possible, introduce change as a slow process
- 11) Identify a change agent (individual or group) who understands the context in which the institution operates

Providing communication and information about the change helps to alleviate doubtful feelings about anticipated implications and consequences of change. Reinforcing some aspect of existing behaviors, attitudes, or procedures is a good way to lead into specific information about the change. If the information serves a knowledge function, individuals may feel a need to change. If possible, begin the change by selecting secure, non-competitive individuals or groups. Then provide information such as: (1) the purpose of the change, (2) proposed time frame, (3) anticipated results, and (4) rewards for changing, or (5) the penalty for not changing. Present the most desirable information first; then, give people time to change.

At the present and continuing into the future, vocational and technical educators must be sensitive to the technical, legal, psychological, and social changes influencing occupational developments and labor market demands. When human as well as material resources needed in a particular work environment change, so must training programs. If vocational and technical education is to meet the manpower challenges of the future, it is imperative that new developments be a major priority for change. Finally, changes in vocational education which are initiated from within the institution can occur with less stress and more ease than if these changes are subjected to community pressures. As changes occur in our society, they pressure vocational education's commitment to meet manpower needs. In turn, vocational education's reaction to these outside forces is a basis for accountability.

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